

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

Quarterly Report

SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM PREPATORY ELECTION OBSERVATION PROGRAMME under USAID/Datex, Inc. STRENGTH Grant No. 00-G-1012 (USAID/RCSA Project Number: 690-0287) July 1 to September 30, 2000

I. SUMMARY

This report reviews the activities and key results of the Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) from July 1 through September 30, 2000. During this reporting period, the SADC PF and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) entered into a cooperative agreement with the USAID/Regional Center of Southern Africa (RCSA) to develop the SADC Parliamentary Forum's institutional capacity to observe and report on elections in the southern Africa region. This will be accomplished through the development and implementation of the SADC PF Preparatory Election Observation Program (PEOP) and a Memorandum of Implementation that outlines program activities. In addition, NDI began to compile information for the regional election team database, drafted the election observation handbook and designed the parliamentarians' first workshop.

II. BACKGROUND

There has been growing concern in the region that key political actors in the SADC region have not had a significant presence at regional elections. This lack of involvement has led to the practice of monitoring and intervention of national elections by institutions based outside of the region. Regional leaders want to increase international confidence in the capacity of regional institutions to manage their own democratic processes. To support the sovereignty of SADC PF and its development as a regional organization to support democratic election processes, the SADC PF and NDI established a partnership to support the continued development of the Forum's independence as a regional organization.

The SADC PF and NDI worked together during the SADC PF's Namibia, Mozambique, Mauritius and Zimbabwe election observation missions. As a result of these activities, the Forum gained significant election observation experience. The SADC PF has begun to build a solid foundation from which it can implement its election observation missions independent of NDI's direct in-country assistance. At this stage of institutional development, one of the Forum's priorities is election observation training for members of parliament and parliamentary staff to accelerate its internal capacity to prepare and manage election observation missions. After its election observation mission to Zimbabwe, the SADC PF and NDI decided to develop a program design that would build on the Forum's previous election observation experience and promote the Forum's sovereignty. The one-year Preparatory Election Observation Program (PEOP) was designed to advance the Forum's capacity to implement, manage and observe elections in the region.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

A. Development of the Preparatory Election Observation Program (PEOP)

The objectives of the *Preparatory Election Observation Program (PEOP)* were agreed upon. They are:

- to create a regional organizational capacity to observe the entire election process in all of the SADC member countries
- to develop institutional proficiencies and individual competencies to resolve election related conflicts
- to establish in the SADC Parliamentary Forum the skills and information necessary to execute response-ready election observation missions; including technical, political, logistical and operational components

In order to achieve the objectives of this program, activities are divided into three components:

1. Enhance MP's expertise in various technical aspects of election observation through the exchange of shared experiences and information at the regional, pan-regional and international levels, including the examination of organizational practices.
2. Provide comprehensive training for SADC Parliamentary Forum secretariat and parliamentary staff with an emphasis on organizational and technical skills that are essential to support election observation missions.
3. Collect and distribute documents about how to organize election observation missions.

B. Memorandum of Implementation

During the establishment of the PEOP, the SADC PF and NDI developed and signed a Memorandum of Implementation. The MOI specifies the individual and collective responsibilities of each organization in executing the program agreed to in PEOP.

C. Development and Implementation of the PEOP Component II - Staff Training

The second component of PEOP was designed to provide training to member-country parliamentary staff and the SADC PF secretariat, which will be attached to observer missions. The objective was to provide training to enhance the capacity of parliamentary staff to effectively organize and support election observation missions. Training focused on logistical preparations, investigation, analysis, reporting, and financial administration for pre-election, election day and post-election missions. Special emphasis was given to the process of reporting and its importance throughout the election observation mission. The SADC Parliamentary Forum hosted the event and worked in collaboration with NDI in developing materials and the training agenda and in recruiting outside presenters.

The one-week training program for SADC parliamentary staff was held in Windhoek, Namibia, the week of September 18. Thirty-five staff from 11 countries (Angola, Botswana, Malawi,

Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) attended the training. Every parliament selected three staff to attend the training with the exception of Namibia, which had five staff present. The 17 trainers and facilitators were carefully selected from throughout the SADC region to provide a broad background of experiences and enhance co-operation. The shared experiences of individuals and organizations from SADC countries as trainers and facilitators promoted both national and regional approaches to democratic consolidation. At the conclusion of the training all participants received a certificate of completion.

Prior to launching into the formal training program, facilitators explained to participants the objectives of the workshops. They noted there were expectations on both sides and that the Forum had organized the training for the benefit of the parliamentary staff's professional development as well as the development of the Forum's organizational capacity to observe elections in the region. Each three-member country team was expected to return to their respective parliaments with a complementary set of skills and knowledge as it relates to election observation. The final goal was to provide comprehensive election observation training to each country.

The program in Namibia included three days of plenary sessions with small breakout sessions and two days of skill building workshops. Eighteen workshops, each with a different topic, were offered during the two days. Each participant attended six workshops. Participants and trainers received a collection of election related resource materials: briefing materials used in past election observation missions; election reports from international, regional, and national governments and non-governmental organizations; gender manifestos; examples of logistical and administrative forms; a copy of the SADC PF constitution; and a draft staff election observation handbook as well as many other documents (see attached materials list). During the week, many of the trainers provided participants with additional materials: research and reporting, project and team management, briefing materials and the role of the media and civil society.

A total of eight plenary sessions were held over a three-day period. A total of 12 presenters participated in the eight sessions. Because only seven of the 35 participants had previously participated in an election observation mission, the plenary sessions were designed to provide participants with a solid theoretical as well as practical foundation on election observation. Presenters emphasized the significance that elections play in the evolution and building of democratic processes in their region. After providing a theoretical base, the SADC PF presenters focused on practical approaches to support an election observation mission.

The first two plenary sessions provided staff with a broad context for election observation by presenting a comparative analysis of the electoral systems and practices in the region. Facilitators gave a comprehensive presentation of election observation in Southern Africa, which included discussions on regional and international approaches. Participants were encouraged to share their own knowledge and experiences with their colleagues. Lively question-and-answer periods followed each plenary session. The sessions provided an opportunity for participants to learn from their regional neighbors and compare and contrast the different electoral systems and practices operating in the region.

After providing a broader picture of election observation, both internationally and regionally, the plenary sessions focused on specific activities in the pre-election, election day and post-election processes. This provided the staff with a comprehensive picture of the multitude of activities and players involved in elections. Issues such as the delimitation of electoral constituencies, voter registration, electoral framework, the constitution and election law, contesting parties and candidates, management and

administrative processes, funding of elections, election officials roles and responsibilities, voter education, voting and counting ballots and acceptance of results were examined in the sessions.

On the third day of plenary sessions, facilitators focused on the role of the SADC PF in election observation process in relation to political actors involved in the process including political parties, civil society, the media and observers. The panelists explored with the participants issues such as sensitivities of national political culture, security matters, standards for professional conduct, human rights and the role of the media. The final plenary session provided participants with the basic project management skills that are required to manage an election observation mission.

Facilitators asked teams to work together in developing their own personal agendas, which involved selecting the specific workshops that each person would attend. A total of 18 skill-building and interactive workshops were offered over a two-day period. Participants were encouraged to consider their personal interests and professional experiences in selecting specific workshops. Each of the three members attended a different workshop, to ensure that the team as a whole attended all 18 workshops. Facilitators emphasized that the 18 different workshops were designed to build a well-trained parliamentary staff within each SADC member parliament. Three workshops with 10-12 participants were conducted simultaneously. The three categories of workshops that took place simultaneously were logistical and administrative organizing, communicating with stakeholders and research and report writing. The participants were free to move from one category to the next during the two-day period.

The logistics and administration workshops provided participants with a comprehensive list of the variety of arrangements that need to be managed before, during and after an election observation mission. Staff learned what goes into opening and equipping an in-country headquarters; organizing accommodations and transportation both regionally and in-country; what systems of communications must be set-up and managed; how to identify and work with vendors; hiring local staff to round out the team; security issues that must be considered in all aspects of their work; budget preparations including paying invoices, anticipating daily expenses, calculating per diem and deployment expenses; contracting for local services and reconciling expenses. Participants learned the importance of daily management of itineraries to the overall effectiveness of the mission. Identifying key stakeholders, problem solving, developing contact lists and maintaining communication with stakeholders throughout the process were also addressed. Facilitators discussed the different roles of delegation members and the relationship between the secretary general, delegates and staff.

Two separate sessions were devoted to the topic of deployment. In the first session, participants explored the geography, safety, hot spots and other issues that determine exactly where the mission should deploy. After learning how to develop team deployment plans, they then addressed how to use their time in the field including whom to meet and developing itineraries. Next, the participants looked at the logistical and financial issues that need to be put into place to support the team in the field. Issues such as accommodations, travel arrangements, transportation, health and safety, interpretation, communication with headquarters and other stakeholders, and financial support for deployment teams were all addressed.

The second category of training workshops focused on the various political actors involved in elections and the importance of developing and maintaining communication systems. The workshops began by illustrating the role of political parties and civil society in all phases of the election process. Presenters explained the rights and responsibilities of the media during elections and provided practical tips on

working with the media, writing press releases and organizing press conferences. One workshop explored the issue of gender in elections. Examples of various types of programs and processes used in the region to increase women's representation in political life through election activities were discussed. Mobilizing women, working with political parties and government, and raising awareness through voter education and monitoring were all explored.

Facilitators presented practical systems for research and obtaining contact information about political actors and their activities. Participants reviewed methods used to gather, compile, and maintain contact information to support a variety of activities such as national, regional stakeholders, media and observation missions. This category of training concluded with an overview of the types of election observation orientations that need to be organized in pre-election, election day and post-election missions and the specific components and resource materials that need to be developed in preparation for orientations.

Special emphasis was given to the third category of workshops, research and report writing because background materials are a valuable resource to observer missions and provide political and historical context for an election. Participants learned how to compile and prepare a comprehensive briefing book and resource materials for use not only during the election, but also as a resource afterwards. Presenters distributed examples of resource materials: background papers on the political environments, political parties and candidates; political party manifestos; codes of conduct for political parties; mock ballot papers; voting procedures; counting and tabulating ballots; codes of conduct for observers; reports on electoral systems; and previous election results. Participants reviewed how to prepare a briefing paper for a pre-election assessment delegation and how the paper is subsequently updated with the information gathered from each pre-election assessment.

In the session on preparing election reports, presenters provided comprehensive information on the preparation of election reports. Staff reviewed how to prepare pre-assessment, election observation and post-election draft reports. Issues of discussion included the context of the election, the role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum in election observation, the findings of the pre-election assessment mission, the findings and recommendations of the election observation missions and analysis of immediate post-election developments.

One workshop reviewed techniques for note taking, listening and interviewing. Participants reviewed and practiced listening exercises in mock interviews and were required to write brief reports about the interviews. Facilitators emphasized the importance of note taking during election observation missions because the notes form the basis of reports about an election process.

C. Resource Center Development

The third program component of PEOP provides the SADC Parliamentary Forum with the infrastructure to organize and manage each election observation mission thoroughly and consistently. During the first quarter, the SADC PF and NDI began collecting documents to build SADC PF's resource library. The library will contain theoretical and practical materials, a database and an election observation staff handbook.

At the Windhoek workshops, participants completed two data forms. One form contained information such as name, place of residence, address, language fluency, professional and educational background, and preferences for staff assignments for future election observation missions. The second data form listed which workshops each participant attended. With technical assistance from NDI, the Forum will use the information contained in the data forms to develop an internal membership database. The database will assist the Forum in the design of its future election observation missions by identifying parliamentary staff who have participated in election observations, who have received election observation training and in what areas, and their team assignment preferences. The data also shows what professional and educational training the staff may have that can further support the missions. For example, information in the 32 data forms that the Forum received from participants reflects that 25 participants have never participated in election observation, seven had observed at least one election in the past, and none of the staff had received any formal training on the topic of election observation.

The materials that were distributed during the staff training have been compiled and will be available in SADC PF's resource center. They include a variety of election related resource materials that have been produced by missions and political actors in the election process. There are also materials from each of the workshops and a draft staff handbook. The handbook was designed to provide staff with a comprehensive overview of the activities that need to be implemented and managed throughout an election observation mission. Collection of resource materials will continue throughout the duration of PEOP to further develop SADC PF's resource center.

As mentioned previously, special emphasis was given to reporting and its importance throughout the election observation mission. The reports produced by SADC PF at the completion of its observation missions have been distributed to all SADC PF member parliaments for debate and discussion and will be included in the resource center at the SADC PF secretariat in Windhoek, Namibia, and the future SADC PF web site.

The 17 trainers and facilitators at the workshops included experts in the area of media, organizing and management, researching and reporting, civil society, gender, human rights, election observation and electoral systems. By fostering the exchange of expertise and information in the region, the SADC PF has strengthened its institutional reputation and its ability to promote democratic processes at the national level. Many of the trainers will continue to be resource persons for the SADC PF and advocates for the Forum within their professional communities. Several of the experts will also continue to serve as a resource for the staff handbook as it is finalized.

D. Development of Draft Election Observation Staff Handbook

During this quarter, the first eight chapters of the draft handbook were prepared. They include:

- The Protocols of Election Observation
- Points of Inquiry: Pre-Election, Election Day and Post-Election Activities
- Organizing A Mission
- Organizing Deployment Activities
- External Communications: Developing Itineraries & Agendas
- Working with the Media
- Preparing Delegation Orientations
- Research and Reporting

A draft of the handbook was distributed at the training workshops to give participants the opportunity to examine the handbook and provide their input. Based upon the staff's responses and continued research, the handbook is being further refined and developed. Subsequent chapters will be added including chapters on gender and the role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum Secretariat in election observation. The SADC PF will publish the final version of the handbook, which will be used for future election observation mission preparation and staff training.

One important section of the handbook is the detailed checklist that includes tasks that need to be completed during the course of pre-election assessments, election day observations and post-election evaluations. Additional checklists and forms will be in the final version of the handbook including polling station observation checklists.

IV. PROGRAM CONCLUSION/EVALUATION

On the final day of the program, each country team was given a program evaluation form to be completed as a team, not individually. The objective was to assess the quality of the program and determine what future training the participants would recommend. All of the participants found the entire program to be extremely useful as well as appropriately participatory. Participants commented that the quantity of information was difficult to absorb in the short amount of time and that they wanted to attend all skill building workshops that were offered. This was their first opportunity to learn about such issues, to share their ideas and to meet their colleagues from other countries. Participants agreed that sending staff on election observation missions without prior training and limited understanding of their expectations and responsibilities was not only frightening but also cause for concern because they wanted to excel in their role.

At the end of the training program, participants felt prepared to join an election observation team. They knew what to expect and what was expected of them. They had the opportunity to examine comparative electoral systems in the region, to learn about election observation in the broadest sense in terms of international, pan-regional and regional roles and they gained comprehensive knowledge about the many facets of activities involved in the pre-election, election day and post-election phases of the election process and their role in the process. They also had the opportunity to see how all of the different political actors fit into the process. They were exposed to the role of human rights, media, civil society and political parties in the process of elections. As a result of the training, they have practical skills that give them the confidence and competence to become team players during the SADC Parliamentary Forum's election observation missions.

It is important to note the importance the participants placed upon having the opportunity to meet their colleagues from the region and learn about their individual parliamentary practices and processes. Participants were encouraged to return to their respective parliaments and share the knowledge gained and materials that were gathered.

V. RESULTS

The SADC Parliamentary Forum's Preparatory Election Observation Program (PEOP) staff training furthered the SADC PF's efforts to develop and enhance its own institutional capacity to observe elections and achieve the program's objectives:

- to create a regional organizational capacity to observe the entire election process in all of the SADC member countries;
- to develop the institutional capacity, building on existing individual competencies, to resolve election related conflicts;
- to develop in the SADC Parliamentary Forum the skills and information necessary to execute response-ready election observation missions; inclusive of technical, political, logistical and operational components.

As a result of the staff-training program, the SADC PF possesses knowledgeable and confident staff in election observation processes, which will support the Forum as it promotes democratic standards within the SADC region. This accomplishment has contributed toward USAID/RCSA's *Strategic Objective # 1 (SO 1)*, "*Increased Regional Capacity to Influence Democratic Performance.*"

The results of the SADC Parliamentary Forum's accomplishments correspond to the following intermediate results under USAID/RCSA Strategic Objective #1:

IR #1: Increased information sharing within the region. SADC parliaments will now have greater knowledge of electoral systems and practices in the region. A total of six plenary sessions were conducted over a three-day period, which provided staff with a comprehensive understanding of regional electoral systems and election observation practices and the process involved in all phases of the pre-election, election day and post-election periods. Staff was exposed to the many stakeholders involved in the election process and was provided with relevant, practical examples from the region. Staff actively participated in the plenary dialogue and shared their regional experiences. A total of 35 staff were exposed to the election-related topics in a comprehensive manner by 17 trainers from throughout the region, many of them for the first time, and encouraged to share their knowledge with their colleagues in their respective parliaments.

IR #2: Increased advocacy and other co-operation to bring regional experience to bear at the national level. The staff were educated about the standards for free and fair elections, code of conduct and the roles and responsibilities for the various stakeholders involved in the election process. Armed with such knowledge, the staff can participate in the observation process better informed and prepared to advocate that elections be conducted in accordance with democratic processes. The incorporation of 17 trainers from throughout SADC further served to expand the level of co-operation, information sharing and advocacy for democratic practices at the regional level.

VI. FUTURE EVALUATION

As part of the PEOP agreement, the SADC Parliamentary Forum and NDI will continue the staff evaluation process following the SADC PF's Tanzania election observation mission. At the completion of the Tanzania election observation program, some of the delegates and all of the staff will participate in

an evaluation process to determine the level of knowledge and skills that the parliamentary staff contributed to the observation mission. It will be determined what weaknesses and strengths the staff exhibited and what areas of future training may be necessary. A combination of verbal and written methods will be used to gather this information.